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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 003297

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2014
TAGS: [KN](#) [KS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: ROH PUSHING NORTH KOREAN AGENDA TO BITTER END

REF: A. SEOUL 003287

[1](#)B. SEOUL 003224

Classified By: POL Joseph Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On November 8, poloffs met with Professor Kim Keun-sik, professor of North Korea studies at Kyungnam University and Blue House advisor on North Korean policy. Kim accompanied Roh to Pyongyang for the October 2-4 summit and is a reliable source on Roh's DPRK policy. While acknowledging that a liberal presidential candidate could not win in December, Kim explained that the Roh administration was pushing "full-steam" ahead on talks with North Korea to make a declaration ending the Korean War and to establish a peace regime. Kim also observed that the upcoming prime ministerial meetings between North and South Korea would focus on signing specific economic deals based on the October 4 joint statement, and not likely address political or military issues in detail. END SUMMARY.

FULL STEAM AHEAD ON DECLARATION ENDING KOREAN WAR

[1](#)2. (C) Kim Keun-sik, one of the foremost liberal North Korea scholars and a close Roh Moo-hyun advisor, explained that unlike Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam, who were weighed down by scandals during their last days in office (reftel B), President Roh's lack of similar distractions gives him the time and legitimacy to pursue his North Korea policy objectives. Roh Moo-hyun does not trust the North Korea policy of either of the conservative candidates Lee Myung-bak and Lee Hoi-chang, and wants to ensure that an incoming conservative administration cannot roll back the fruits of his "Engagement Policy" or Kim Dae-jung's "Sunshine Policy" toward the North. Kim said that Roh would literally be working to forge new policies, regardless of the president-elect's views, until "midnight on February 24," the day before the inauguration of the incoming president. Roh's goal, Kim said, was to formally end the Korean War and pave the way for permanent peace.

[1](#)3. (C) Professor Kim said that the Blue House envisioned a declaration ending the Korean War as the first step to establishing a lasting peace and eventual reunification. The October summit between Roh and Kim Jong-il and the resulting joint declaration were significant because they confirmed North Korea's commitment to denuclearization and establishing a peace regime. He predicted that through increased economic

cooperation and regular dialogue between North and South, it will increasingly be "possible for the two Koreas to enter a low degree of confederation."

¶4. (C) Kim confirmed speculation about tension between the Blue House and MOFAT regarding the significance of a declaration ending the Korean War. Kim noted that Foreign Minister Song Min-soon had mirrored the USG's position that an end-of-war declaration was an unnecessary intermediate step, although the Blue House felt that such a declaration was an important initial step toward furthering the goals of denuclearization and peace. Kim noted that he believed that Song had recently adopted the Blue House view, and that he would step up a diplomatic offensive with the U.S. and the PRC to allow such a declaration before Roh leaves office.

UPCOMING PRIME MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

¶5. (C) Kim expected that the prime ministerial meetings, scheduled for November 14-16, would mainly flesh out and document economic proposals previously agreed to during the October summit. He doubted that any new military or political agreements would be made during this round of talks. However, the DPRK side was surprisingly eager to agree on various projects, and, for the first time, that they were suggesting more new proposals than South Korea in the preparatory meetings. The meeting preparations were going more smoothly than in the past since direct communication between the two governments was now possible. He also noted that PM Han Duk-soo, as a highly talented and respected technocrat, would faithfully carry out Roh's goals and not have a particular voice in the North Korean policy debate.

¶6. (C) Kim predicted that any new consensus regarding a declaration ending the Korean War would not happen prior to the December presidential election, but that the Blue House was targeting the January-February timeframe before Roh's successor takes office. He also thought it unlikely that another North-South summit would occur prior to Roh's leaving office. Should talks progress, Kim speculated that Kim Yong-nam, President of the Supreme People's Assembly, could visit Seoul for additional discussions with President Roh.

SIDE MEETINGS

¶7. (C) The October summit received much fanfare for the size of the delegation that accompanied Roh Moo-hyun to Pyongyang -- scholars, artists, business leaders, etc., were all purportedly on the trip to have important discussions with their counterparts. However, Kim said there were no meetings of substance for him or the others who accompanied Roh. In his meeting with North Korean scholars, Kim presented several ideas, holding joint seminars for example, but met with muted indifference from his North Korean counterparts.

A CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE WILL WIN

¶8. (C) Like other Blue House sources (reftel A), Kim was pessimistic about United New Democratic Party (UNDP) candidate Chung Dong-young's chances in the upcoming presidential election and predicted that a conservative candidate would win. Professor Kim said that the Blue House expected either Grand National Party (GNP) candidate Lee Myung-bak or newly-declared independent Lee Hoi-chang to win.

Kim considered progressive Chung too "divisive" and "blustering" and said that Chung was a politician for the 1980s with an unattractive political style. He predicted that if Sohn Hak-kyu, who lost to Chung in the primary, was the candidate, the UNDP would have had a better chance to retain the Blue House.

COMMENT

19. (C) Kim is often called on to represent the North Korean position at seminars in Seoul. A member of the inner circle of the Roh government, Kim speaks to the mood in the Blue House on North Korea policy. According to Kim, Roh, energetic to the end, looks at everything as a struggle and plans to battle the media, the president-elect, and even the U.S. to the very end to push his North Korean agenda.

VERSHBOW